

A N
O R A T I O N.

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Nov. 15. 1760.

TO A

F E W F R I E N D S

O F

LIBERTY AND THEIR COUNTRY.

As an INTRODUCTION to an

ANNUAL MEETING, on that DAY.

HAC LUCE VIVUNT VETERES, HINC VITA POSTERIS.

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A N

ORATION.

Rara temporum felicitas, ubi sentire quæ velis, et quæ sentias dicere licet.

TACIT. Hist.

AS it has been usual, GENTLEMEN, in societies like this, for some member to expatiate on the occasion of assembling, so there is a peculiar propriety in such an address, at the opening of a room for this purpose; which is professedly with an higher view than that of mere unmeaning jocularity,

cularity, the topics of local conversation, or an indulgence to disorderly riot.

To raise and strengthen in our minds a sense of the inestimable privileges, with which as Britons and protestants we are favoured ; to pay the just tribute of applause to those who have been, or are, the assertors of liberty, and illustrious benefactors of mankind ; to recount the signal interpositions of providence in favour of our country, and to bind ourselves in the cords of loyalty and mutual service to a conduct worthy of such apprehensions and blessings ; these are the important things before us, ---- the worthy and beneficial purposes of such an institution. As it is not to be doubted but such, Gentlemen, are your designs in the present meeting, there is no need of an apology, to you, for an attempt so to improve it. To *intreat* your candid allowances to *my* performance on the occasion would imply a doubt of your good-nature. I want them too much,

much, and know you too well, to suppose any solicitation thereof necessary.----- Two of the greatest blessings with which mankind can be favoured in this life are *civil and religious liberty*. They convey, if wisely improved, all that is dear, excellent and happy. For what are they, but the full allowance and protection of government, to exert our abilities of body and mind, to make ourselves and others as happy as possible, in connection with the good of the community, to which our primary duties belong? That industry and genius should have their amplest play; property its most inviolated security: that *truth* and *reason* may display their beams, and speak their generous message, without interruption or restraint.

WITHOUT the smiles of *civil liberty*, what comfort can attend the largest possessions; what relieve the weariness of toil, or prompt the studious citizen to commercial endeavour, where all acquirements depend

on so precarious a tenure as the will of a tyrant, and the minions of lawless power?

* “ Fell tyrants strike beyond the bone,

And wound the soul; bow genius down:
Lay virtue waste! for worth or arts who
strain,

To throw them at a monster's foot?

'Tis property supports pursuit;

Freedom gives eloquence, and *freedom* gain.”

And who that knows any thing of the pleasure of investigating truth; who hath any acquaintance with that code of wisdom that was writ by the finger of heaven for the instruction and felicity of man; who that is sensible of the dignity of his rational nature, doth not abhor every species of *mental oppression*? Where this infernal monster bears sway, the charter of celestial blessing is with-held from the people. Should truth

* Young.

with

with her friendly ray inform the mind, the tongue dares not confess the approbation of the heart; nor offer to the deity a voluntary service. Immediately the alarm of heresy is spread, and the blood-hounds of persecution let loose to pursue the children of integrity to chains and death. We need but cast our eye to the nearest state where this iniquitous system prevails; we need but revolve the pages of our own history, and see it described in the large characters of relentless fury and devastation.

“ When the red purple tyrant cry’d out
Blood.”

If then to be delivered from such darkness, and intolerable bondage, into the fullest light of divine truth, be a favour of the highest nature and worth! if to walk in our own fields, and within our families with enjoyment and quiet, be preferable to the
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state of those who dwell under the rod of arbitrary power, and hold their property,

* "Like the light down upon the thistle's
beard,

Which every breeze may part."

IF to engage with zeal, fortitude, and success, to restore or secure these rights of mankind, when invaded, constitutes an heroic and amiable character; it is the becoming duty of those who dwell in the land of liberty, to acknowledge the obligation; to improve its light; to promote its cause; to revere its distinguished patrons; and to rejoice with all its friends.

BUT it is not my province to dilate on general remarks. We are called to celebrate a particular character and event; and truly one of the brightest on the roll of glory is that which obtains this remembrance,

viz,

viz. “ the landing and happy revolution effected by WILLIAM III.

I NEED not give you, Gentlemen, a long detail of circumstances that preceded or accompany'd this remarkable event. Your acquaintance with the history of your country teaches you the necessity and importance of it; and your experience, at this day, evinces the value and greatness of this transaction.

FROM the beginning of the year 1685, to the latter end of 88, the throne of this kingdom was filled by a prince who had drank deep at the poison'd fountain of Romish superstition, and despotic power. Impell'd by that restless zeal to propagate her cause, and enslave mankind, which is the offspring of popery, it was the invariable aim of JAMES II. to overturn the beauteous superstructure of protestantism and law. To effect this, nothing however unjust, how-

ever inhumanly barbarous, was refused. A crowded catalogue of severe and lawless prosecutions, arbitrary fines, and loathsome imprisonments, particularly the confinement of the protestant prelates, and the imposition of popish, may testify the abundant earnestness with which he laboured to destroy the constitution; to preserve which in its civil and religious purity, he had just taken the most solemn oaths.

AND can nothing be done to avert this destruction which rolls tremendous onward? Shall the absurd doctrine of corrupt priests, and despicable flatterers, of passive obedience, and “the *right divine* of kings to govern wrong.” restrain the arm of the virtuous from the defence of property, religion and life? Happy was it, that as the motion of the king was so violent, so the fire kindled by its rapidity alarmed and excited the cares of all true patriots. They apply to WILLIAM prince of ORANGE, and invite him to restore
a sink-

a sinking nation. To him providence reserved the honour of accomplishing that deliverance. He came, he saw; and *priestcraft* and *tyranny* fled at his approach; superstition no longer repeated her dismal sound, or shook her bloody scourge; *law* was restored to its original splendor and majesty, and the privileges of the people were acknowledged and fixed upon the most solid foundation. Here may liberty date her first effectual establishment; for never till then was she enthroned in all her dignity, and taught to extend her cheering influence to every individual. To this period therefore shall her genuine sons revert, with grateful delight; and hail the hero in this proceeding of honour and virtue with the most cordial applause.

PREJUDICE and *partiality* will calumniate the fairest characters; or, as occasion serves, will lift the worthless to the pinnacle of fame. There is none, I know, that has been at-

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tacked with greater virulence than the name we honour. Perfection is not the attribute of man ; nor will the warmest advocates for the revolution, take upon them to defend every action of his life. As they are too honest to deny the regard due to great deserving, so they are not clear-sighted enough to discover that this is incumbent upon them. The principles on which the revolution was founded are the unalterable dictates of reason and good policy, the only support of an equal and happy government ; and as such will ever remain impregnable to all assaults. Nor let this remark be construed as any prudential concession to the injury of a truly noble character. Notwithstanding that torrent of abuse which, in times less happy, as more bigotted, hath been thrown upon him ; and the late attacks which have been made in the same cause ; I am persuaded there will appear to every inquirer into the life and reign of WILLIAM III. the most solid evidences of a great
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and good prince, labouring, with an uniform design, to secure and perpetuate the dearest liberties of mankind ; amidst the dangers of war, the tumults of sedition, and the murmurs of base ingratitude and discontent.

EVER will it be an illustrious testimony to his patriot concern for mankind, and command our veneration of his memory, that by him was secured the succession in the illustrious house of HANOVER, whose rule hath been the greatest honour and happiness to these kingdoms.

FOR GEORGE I. was one of the wisest and best of princes. One who deeply entered into those salutary measures of government which have the people's welfare for their basis. To preserve the civil and religious rights of his subjects ; to promote and strengthen the cause of protestantism, and, by the influence of his councils, to maintain

the peace of Europe ; were the great designs which glowed in his breast, and directed his measures with unshaken steadiness and vigour.

AND can malice herself suggest, can faction unblushing utter a reproach against HIM whose remains were this week followed by the long train of sorrow to the grave !

THE greatest monsters of barbarity have been exalted in lying lays, and venal panegyrics. Tho' LOUIS XIV. of France was a NERO in rapaciousness and cruelty, yet harmony was taught to grow wanton in his praise, and rhetoric exhausted her powers on the servile theme. Nay JAMES I. that
* “ weak prince and bad man,” (as he is

* See the portrait of this monarch by HARRIS. This author hath also published the life of CHARLES I. drawn from original writers and state-papers : and both pieces are very valuable, for the diligence, fidelity, and clearness of the history, and the spirited remarks that run through them in the cause of universal liberty.

now universally allowed to be) was by a base tribe of courtiers, and ambitious priests, celebrated as the Solomon of his age. Truth, impartial rigorous truth, collects unfading wreaths for our deceased sovereign. As his reign, by an indulgent Providence, was long continued to us; so the whole course of it was mark'd by the fairest justice, and the most cheerful, unlimited and benign goodness: That his subjects, as with one hand, may subscribe the chronicle of his excellence, and the annals of Europe will shine with the brightest lustre, when they dwell on his unequalled successes and honours.

I REMEMBER, it was affirmed by LYSIPPUS, that he did more real honour to ALEXANDER, by representing him holding a spear, than APELLES who, with an impious pencil, had drawn him in the character of JOVE, brandishing the lightning of the sky.

So when GEORGE II. is characteristically drawn holding the spear, not like ALEXANDER for the purposes of ambition and lawless suit, but to check the ravages of tyranny ; and pouring on the lands he conquered the blessings of his beneficence. ---- When the faithful copier of royal greatness, with a finer essay, presents him with a roll of treaties in his hand, to which he invariably adhered ; the laws of England spread before him, the great *depositum* of liberty, and standard of his rule : while peace and plenty, twin-sisters, scatter their favours round his throne, and harmony, attended by the deep train of arts, bends o'er her lyre to receive the offered songs of triumph ---- How superior the piece ! and what an infinitely nobler pleasure must strike the mind from the view of this amiable portrait, than from surveying a Turkish sultan in all the blaze of eastern magnificence, dictating to his prostrate vassals ; or a proud BOURBON, scattering
fire,

fire, and wasting destruction into neighbouring states !*

As such were the beauteous traits of his excellence, and such the happiness of those who dwelt beneath his shade, it was the wish of every heart that he might complete the circle of his glory by restraining the fury of the war, and giving peace to the nations. But,

“ Death, great proprietor of all--’tis his
To tread on empires, and to quench the
stars.”

It hath pleased him by whom kings reign,
to remove our monarch from an earthly to
a celestial crown. In the midst of triumph
and exultation, of security and internal peace,
this stroke cast a sudden eclipse like midnight

* At VERSAILLES is a celebrated piece of LOUIS XIV. hurling fire into the DANUBE and the RHINE.

over the British hemisphere. Yet, through that infinite goodness, which wounds only to heal, the sky again is clear ; nor need we indulge to hope, less melancholy and woe. It is to joy and congratulation that we rise from beholding the tomb of departed greatness.

A GEORGE still lives ; who, as he inherits the honours, rises to emulate the virtues of his progenitors. Born in GREAT BRITAIN, carefully trained up in the knowledge and love of that excellent constitution which, from earliest life, he was directed to consider as his future charge, he feels the strongest tie to support and strengthen it. And, from all we can collect of his amiable disposition, solid genius, and that earnest of virtuous and peaceful government he hath already given, confidence may be taught to repose at his feet, and hope to lift her steady eye to yet more glorious days for this favoured land.

MAY this confidence be ripened into the richest fruits of filial love and obedience, and this hope be ever exceeded by the long glories and prosperity of our new sovereign's reign !

THO' I may exceed in length, yet I should be wanting to that respect I owe the gentlemen, If I did not subjoin a few words of more particular application.

AND are the hopes, the privileges of Britons peculiarly great ; immensely valuable, are the interposals of a kind providence for us, as conspicuous, as essentially important, which, with the first honors of this day, the intelligence* now received from our magnanimous ally, indisputably evinceth ; let it not be thought a piece of vanity and idle *impertinence*, that we thus express a grateful sense of them ; and how dearly we prize them.

* The victory over DAUN at the battle of TORGAU.
D For-

Forbid it ingenuity! forbid it our future hopes! while we reflect on these subjects with admiration and delight, and the heart beats high with a joy that hath the love of goodness and of mankind for its motive, let us give our sentiments an accordant language of satisfaction and praise. And who are they, that, with a haughty air, affect to look down on associations for this purpose, and to treat us with a contemptuous sneer? Those only, who retaining the leaven of antient prejudice, envy you the blessings which they dare not openly deny. Be it *theirs* to cavil and sneer in corners, at what they ought to approve and promote, while we are contented to *know* and to *enjoy*.

BE it matter of our diligent concern for this will be our truest honour and felicity, to act consistently with the appellation we assume; of freemen and good citizens in every part of life.

STEADI-

STEADINESS, which is the effect of integrity, and consistency, which is the consequence of conviction, is that alone which gives worth and forms the beauty of character. If therefore your situation in life lead you to the pursuits of learning, and you have a taste for the polite arts, and the noble pleasures of philosophy and the Muses, be you sensible, gentlemen, of the particular and inestimable advantages you enjoy for these improvements: where you may exercise your understandings on any subject of moral, civil, or philosophic science, without controul, and pursue your discoveries into profession and practice.

THE *government* not only permits, but patronizes and smiles on the most liberal efforts of genius; sensible that, as its natural attendant, loyalty must keep pace with all just improvements in knowledge.

SCORNING therefore a lazy inactivity, or fallen indifference, be it your's, gentlemen, to examine impartially ; to determine freely ; neither paying a servile submission to names however great, where evidence points out their error, nor sacrificing to singularity under the garb of freedom. And, whether ye sport in the flow'ry vale of fancy, with the finer arts, or search the philosophic grove for more weighty and abstracted truth, let it be discovered how much is gained by these applications, by your free communication of knowledge, and the unbounded benevolence and candour of your temper.

FEW, however, have much time or abilities to travel far in the fields of science. Let those of us then who have but little leisure or advantage for literary improvements, remember for our comfort,

“ Na-

“ Nature hath shewn, by making it so rare,
 That wit's a jewel which we need not wear ;
 Of plain *sound sense* life's current coin is made,
 With *that* we drive the most substantial
 trade.”

Common sense, well laid out, is infinitely better than the most shining abilities misimproved, and much more essential to life and happiness than the proudest stores of learning.

HIGHLY commendable indeed is it, for every one to know something of that constitution to which he belongs, of the value of British privileges, and the genuine principles of protestantism ; that he may act with comfort and usefulness ; and treat with a just contempt every essay of faction to divide and make us uneasy with each other, whether by secret whispers of malice, and sly insinuation ; or in attempting our good faith with the
 positive-

positivenefs and * flow'ry eloquence of bolder declamation.

IF we are defirous of fuch effential attainments ; if we would do honour to this inftitution, by acting from principle ; it will be a good rule of prudence, (permit me to fay) gentlemen, to *us* not to throw away our little time for reading on the tales of wanton or merely frivolous amufement ; which are, for the moft part as wretchedly compofed, as they are pernicious in their tendency and defign ; and may, with great juftice, be ftyled

* The writers here perhaps may be thought to have the New History of England in his eye, which, though it affumes the honourable diftinction of *Compleat*, is in fact deficient in the moft effential articles which conftitute a good hiftory. The ftyle is rather futed to the idle tale of an *Oroöndates*, than the chafte fimplicity of faithful narrative : and fo little appearance is there of a regard to truth ; that the idle tales of his brethren, SHEBBEARE and MAUBERT, ftand in the fame rank of credit with the Author, as the authentic documents of ftates. But the fame plea, it is likely, which DRYDEN offered for writing fometimes incorrectly, SMOLLET may for poisoning wickedly, that he muft eat, though he lives by poisoning others.

(as they are by one of the most † elegant writers of the age) the *Poison* of the mind.

THOSE subjects in which the welfare of mankind in common is nearly interested, *demand*, in some sort, the attention of every individual: and those authors, who treat of them in the most clear, dispassionate, and practical way, should form our little library.

NOR will a converse with these pure and instructive writers, as we have occasional opportunities, joined with the lessons of experience, and the free exercise of our understandings, leave us destitute of a good degree of knowledge, which, if not splendid, will be greatly useful. Sometimes too, it is seen that common abilities, and in an unfavourable situation, make greater acquisitions, by a proper management of their little pow-

† See an excellent paper in the *World*, — On Novels.

ers, than those who are favoured by nature or fortune with more shining talents : As the race is not unfrequently won as much by the skill of the rider, as the spirit and agility of the animal : or, as the commander makes his fortune ; not who has the largest and most ornamented ship, but he who keeps on in his industrious pursuit, nor ever neglects a favouring wind. But, whether we so employ our vacant opportunities or not, we shall, I hope, be ambitious of excelling in the fairest deeds of humanity, good-will, and mutual service*.

SUFFER me to add one more cautionary remark, *viz.* That it is particularly becoming those who have but slender means of information to avoid all rash decision, and con-

* IT is better to *do some good* than to project a great deal. A little practicable virtue is of more use to society than the most sublime theory, or best principles of government ill applied.

duct in matters of public and more intricate debate, lest we act coldly in affairs of real moment, or grow furious with zeal, for what, on more sober inquiry, we discover to be unworthy of our regard; and so subject ourselves to lasting infamy and remorse.

HAPPY were it for BRITAIN, for every town in BRITAIN, if such were the wisdom and conduct of its inhabitants. Then should we hear no more of those absurd and imperious claims which some, even at this day, are ready to make over others; but lest as we are by the government to think freely, and to act from our own conviction, the clamor and bitter contention of party rage would come to an end, with all those scenes of mad licentiousness and revelry, which, at elections, like a palsy, shake the frame of these kingdoms, and threaten its final destruction.

O GLORIOUS prospect! O happy day!
 When wilt thou come with all thy blessed
 E and

and peaceful fruits ! When the pure, the gentle, yet strong flame of patriotism shall affect every bosom, and, studious to serve our KING and COUNTRY by all the methods of honesty and quietness, we shall live however distinguished by lesser unimportant names, like brethren of the same grand family *. --- Then shall we unite not only to celebrate past deliverances, but, as we may trust, the security and addition of every social blessing ; and shall recount them with a rational, deep-felt, because a virtuous joy.

* Veritas et pax, et amor per omnes
Ambulet vicos, scelus omne castâ
Exulet urbe.

CASIM.

F I N I S.